THROUGH THE SAME DOORS
MICAH FIALKA-FELDMAN

www.throughthesamedoor.com
WHAT I WILL BE TALKING ABOUT TODAY...

1. My life in school and in my community.
2. Doors I’ve opened for myself and others.
3. What I’ve learned from my journey.
4. Community is important!
Chapter 1

A little bit about me.
I used to live in Michigan. My parents still live there and Emma lives in Boston.
Since 2012, I LIVE IN SYRACUSE, NEW YORK.

I walk, take the bus and Ubers, and catch rides with friends to campus, social events and to do errands.
IN SYRACUSE, I LIVE with MY ROOMATE

Dan is my roommate.

We cook food. We watch tv. Talk, take walks. Have fun together. We have potucks at our apartment every other week.
Chapter 2
The first DOOR I opened.
I STARTED SCHOOL IN A separate classroom with separate doors. Special Ed Students went in this door. General Ed Students went in this door. I have an intellectual disability.
That was when I told my parents...

“I want to go in the SAME DOOR as all the other kids.”
I had a great CIRCLE OF FRIENDS from 3rd grade until 12th grade!
I PARTICIPATED IN MY I.E.P MEETINGS

• Beginning in 5th grade
• I.E.P. stands for Individual Education Plan
• My teacher helped me plan for my meetings and think about my DREAMS
• Some of my friends came to my meetings. They talked about what I was doing well
• I used PowerPoint slides to share my ideas.
Chapter 3

How I became an advocate and leader
8 YEAR MEMBER OF KASA BOARD
Kids as Self Advocates
of Family Voices
KASA is a national organization created by youth with disabilities to educate society about the rights of youth with disabilities all over the USA.

I got on the Board. That’s why I am smiling!
What I learned from...

I learned about our Disability history and culture, Here are some examples:

Nothing about me without me!
Chapter 4
Opening the door to college
After LOTS of meetings with LOTS of people, my dream came true. I enrolled in Oakland University through the OPTIONS PROGRAM. I had an IEP with the Berkley School District.
Chapter 5

Opening the dorm door
Opening the door to the dorm . . . not easy – but worth it.

In October 2007, I applied to live in the dorm.

My application was accepted and my $$$ and a tour.

Move-in date: January 6 2008.

Then OU changed and said, “You can’t live in the dorm.”
They said, I was NOT a student.
So... I met with the Vice President Of Student Affairs and said,

“I AM a Student"

I pay full tuition.
I take a full load of classes each semester.
My housing application was accepted.
The Vice President still said, I was NOT a student.
In September 2009, I spoke at the University Board of Trustees Meeting. I said,

"I AM a Student!"

I wasn’t going to stop. Here’s what I did next.
They still said, I was NOT a student
I wasn’t going to stop!
Here’s what I did next...

With my friends, I wrote a petition

I got ONE THOUSAND signatures from students

I got over 300 letters and emails from friends, family, professors & disability rights leaders
Students held forums and rallies to support my right to live in the dorm.

They marched through the Student Center, shouting

“Micah IS a student!”
In November 2008 I presented for the SECOND time to OU Board of Trustees

- More than 150 came to the Board meeting
- Over 20 people spoke on my behalf.
- Speakers included the Student Body President and Vice-President, professors, and many other voices in the community.
- Speakers even came from Canada and Nevada!
- A student congress representative said it was the largest movement of student action he had seen ever on campus.
They still said, I was NOT a student.
Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service took on my case.

The case took a loooooooooong two years.

We had 3 hearings in U.S. District Federal Court.

My deposition took 5 hours!
On December 23, 2009, Judge Duggan ordered the University to let me live in the dorm.

He understood that I AM a student!
On January 4, 2010 I moved into the dorm!
I AM a student and I lived in the dorm!
It wasn’t always easy for me. Some days I was upset but I always said,

“If I give up, most things won't change here.”
Work together to open ALL doors for ALL of us!
Chapter 6

My Next Door... an orange door
I’m currently working at Syracuse University School of Education as a Teaching Assistant in two classes:
SPE 311: Perspectives on Disability and DSP 200: Introduction to Disability Studies
My Circle of Support in Syracuse
I hold monthly circle meetings...

Agenda:

- Employment
- Volunteering
- Self Direction
- Presentations
- Film
- Housing
- Social
- Other

And pizza!
A news article discusses current or recent news of either general interest (i.e. daily newspapers) or of a specific topic (i.e. political or trade news magazines, club newsletters, or technology news websites).

**I AM CHARGE OF**

- **MY BUDGET**
- **MY STAFF**
- **MY SERVICES**
HOW I GET MY STAFF

• I choose an agency I work with
• They help me pay my staff
• I put up flyers
• The nice thing about being on a college campus is that there are lots of cool people who want work.
• I interview people.
• I look for people who are young and fun!
I also work as the Outreach Coordinator at the Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education.

We had two panels in California in January to talk about *Intelligent Lives* and inclusion.
A new book about my journey
Please read the last slide out loud with me
“A community that excludes even one of its members, is no community at all.”

-Dan Wilkins